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ABSTRACT

This report presents data from a survey of all 102 Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE) member districts and the nation's 50 largest cities that examined the length of service of current superintendents and tenure of their predecessors between 1985 and June 2000. The average tenure for superintendents who had recently left their positions was nearly twice as long as is generally reported by the media. Among 77 CUBE member school districts, the most recent superintendent to complete his/her superintendency served an average of 5 years. For the nation's 50 largest cities, the average tenure dropped to 4.6 years. Survey results indicated that for the immediate past superintendents, the average tenure was 5.2 years in the 50 cities. Among the 77 CUBE districts, the immediate past superintendents served 6.4 years. Results also found that eight CUBE districts reported having more than five superintendents from 1985-00, while 28 CUBE districts reported that every superintendent whose tenure ended in that the 15-year period served at least 5 years, and 20 reported having at least one current or past superintendent who served for 10 or more years. (SM)

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ED 460 201

CUBE Survey Report

Superintendent Tenure

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National School Boards Association's Council of Urban Boards of Education

National Affiliation & Membership

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) Board of Directors established the Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE) in 1967 to address the unique local needs of school board members serving the largest cities in the United States.

The Council of Urban Boards of Education is the urban component of NSBA's National Affiliate Program. Individual school boards are eligible to participate in CUBE if they are members of their state school boards association and serve a community with a core city population of at least 100,000 or are urban in character.

Purpose

Today, urban public schools are the first to address those critical education issues that ultimately affect all of the nation's public schools. Big-city school districts are faced with the challenge of teaching a culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse student population with educational needs that truly challenge our urban educational systems.

Through issues seminars, workshops, conferences, legislative advocacy, research projects, networking opportunities, specialized publications such as the *Urban Advocate* and *School Board News*, and local policy and governance assistance, CUBE has been at the forefront striving for excellence in urban public schools for more than three decades. CUBE is governed by a 12-member Steering Committee of urban board members.

CUBE, through its Steering Committee and staff, helps school leaders find solutions and alternatives to the myriad of challenges they face at the local level, and seeks to improve their policy-making effectiveness. CUBE creates the opportunity for urban school board members to gather information, develop recommendations, and take appropriate action to improve the quality and equality of education for all children in our cities.

Steering Committee

The CUBE Steering Committee, which meets quarterly, is composed of 12 urban school board members from across the United States, and the Immediate Past Chair. The President and Executive Director of the National School Boards Association serve as ex-officio members of the Committee.

Committee members are elected by the CUBE membership to a 3-year term. The CUBE chair and vice chair are elected by the Steering Committee. The CUBE chair appoints a Nominating Committee to oversee the compilation of a slate of nominees from CUBE member districts in good standing. The Nominating Committee gives consideration to regional, gender, and racial representation when slating nominees.

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Superintendent Tenure: Key Findings

The average tenure for superintendents who recently left their positions is nearly twice as long as is generally reported by the media, according to a new survey by the National School Boards Association's (NSBA) Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE). The survey reviewed the length of service for superintendents in urban districts over the past 15 years.

Among 77 CUBE member school districts that responded to the survey, the most recent superintendent to complete his or her superintendency served an average of five years, the research reveals. CUBE member school districts serve cities with a population of 100,000 or more. For 50 of the largest cities in America, the average tenure drops to 4.6 years.

These numbers are in sharp contrast to widespread media reports suggesting urban superintendents stay on the job only 2.5 years on average.

"After years of using anecdotal evidence to describe the length of the superintendency, CUBE has done a well-documented research study on the issue," says NSBA Executive Director Anne L. Bryant. "This is good news because it shows that the actual experience of superintendents is much more stable than is commonly reported." Still, she adds, there's room for improvement. "The stability of the superintendency has a direct impact on the success of any school district. High turnover among top administrators can undermine reform efforts, as each succeeding superintendent attempts to put his or her own stamp on the district."

The longer period of service, as indicated in the CUBE survey, suggests top administrators have a significant amount of time to make a mark in their districts, allowing them to build on the work of their predecessors, Bryant says. The challenge for urban communities is to build productive relationships with their superintendents to encourage even longer tenures.

The survey was based on data as of June 2000 from among the 102 CUBE member districts and 50 of the 53 largest cities in America.

(continued on next page)

In this latest study, 16 CUBE districts reported that the most recent superintendent to complete his or her tenure served seven years or longer. Seven of the 50 largest urban districts reported the same.

The 50 school districts were also asked about the length of service of the predecessor to their "immediate past" superintendent. For these "once removed" superintendents, the average tenure was slightly longer: 5.2 years for the largest 50 cities, compared to 4.6 years for the most recently departed superintendent.

Among the 77 CUBE districts, the contrast was somewhat greater, with once-removed superintendents having served 6.4 years as opposed to the average tenure of five years for the most recently departed superintendent.

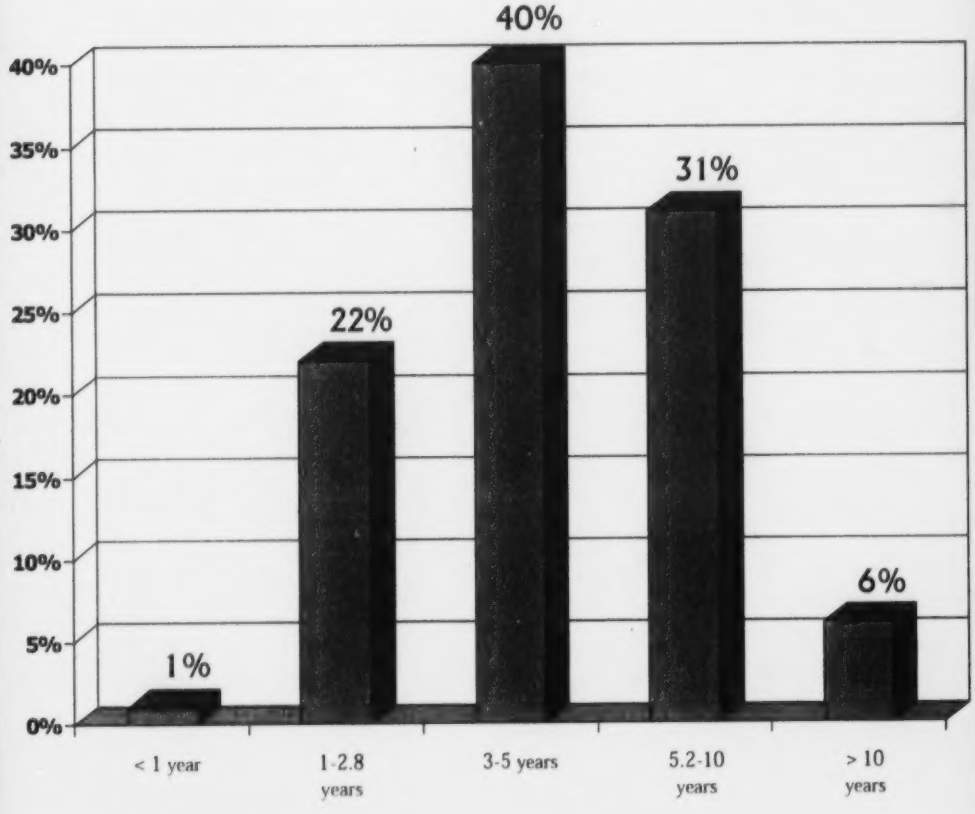
It should be noted that the discrepancy between immediate past and once-removed superintendents is based on the mean service. When data on median service is compared, the difference in service between the immediate past and once-removed past is reduced to 0.2 years for the largest city superintendents and 0.8 years for CUBE district superintendents.

The survey also found that eight CUBE districts reported having more than five superintendents during the 15-year period between 1985 and 2000. In contrast, 28 CUBE districts reported that every superintendent whose tenure ended in the 15-year period served at least five years, and 20 reported having at least one current or past superintendent serve for 10 years or more.

The results of this report may also help urban school boards gauge a level of expectancy for superintendent service for long-range planning and improve the ability to "stay the course" once an educational vision/direction is defined for the school district. For more details, see the charts and tables on the following pages.

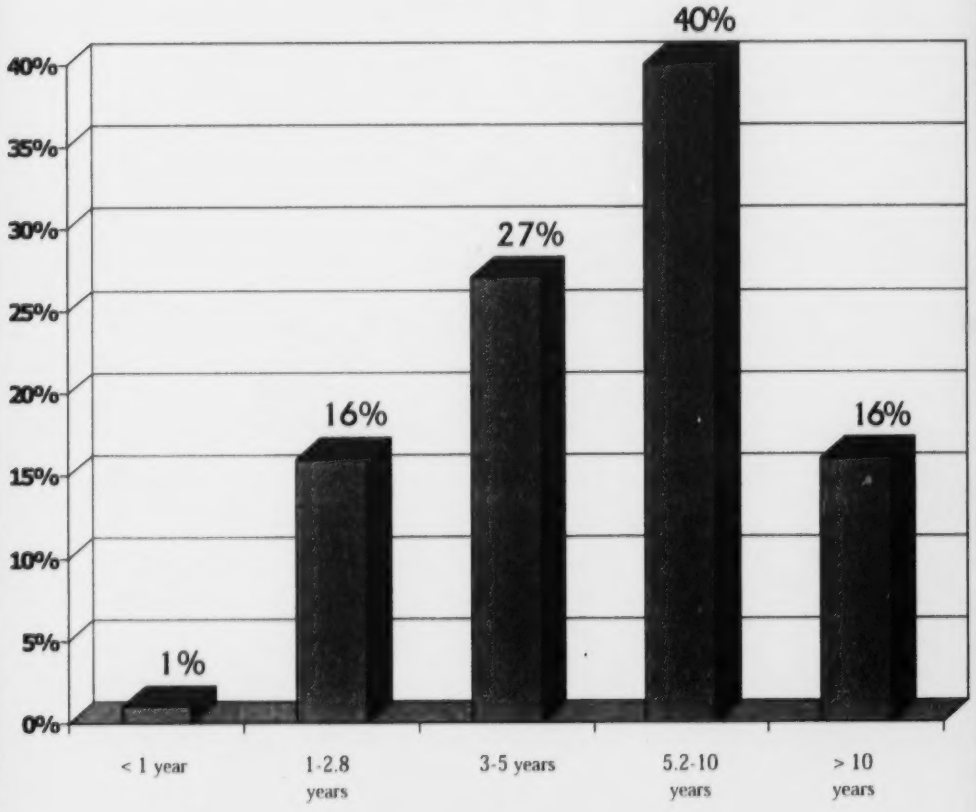
Superintendent Service—CUBE Districts

CUBE Immediate Past Superintendents Years of Service



The survey of CUBE's 102 members, 77 of whom responded, found the superintendents currently in office have served for an average of 3.6 years. The immediate past superintendents in CUBE districts served for an average of 5 years, and the average tenure of their predecessors was 6.4 years.

CUBE Once-Removed Superintendents Years of Service



Some districts had more turnover than others. Eight had more than five superintendents during the approximate 15-year period identified in the survey.

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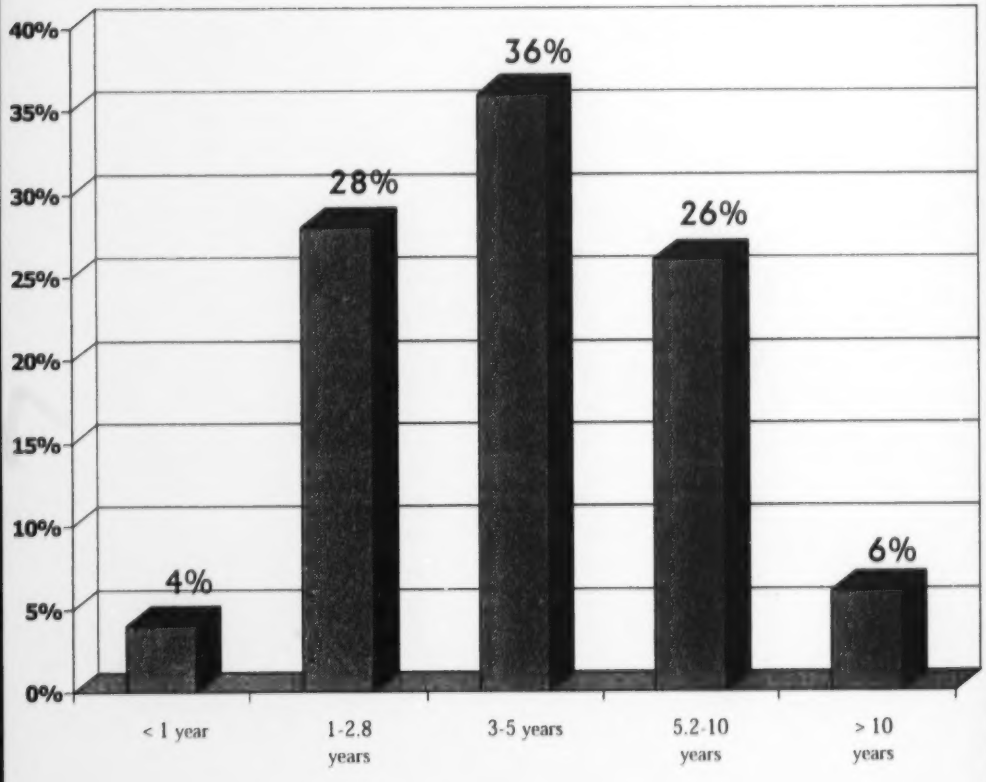
Superintendent Service—
Large Urban Districts

Immediate Past Superintendents
Years of Service



The survey of the 50 largest U.S. cities, 100 percent of whom responded, found the superintendents currently in office have served for an average of 3.4 years. The immediate past superintendents in the nation's largest cities served for an average of 4.6 years, and the average tenure for their predecessors was 5.2 years.

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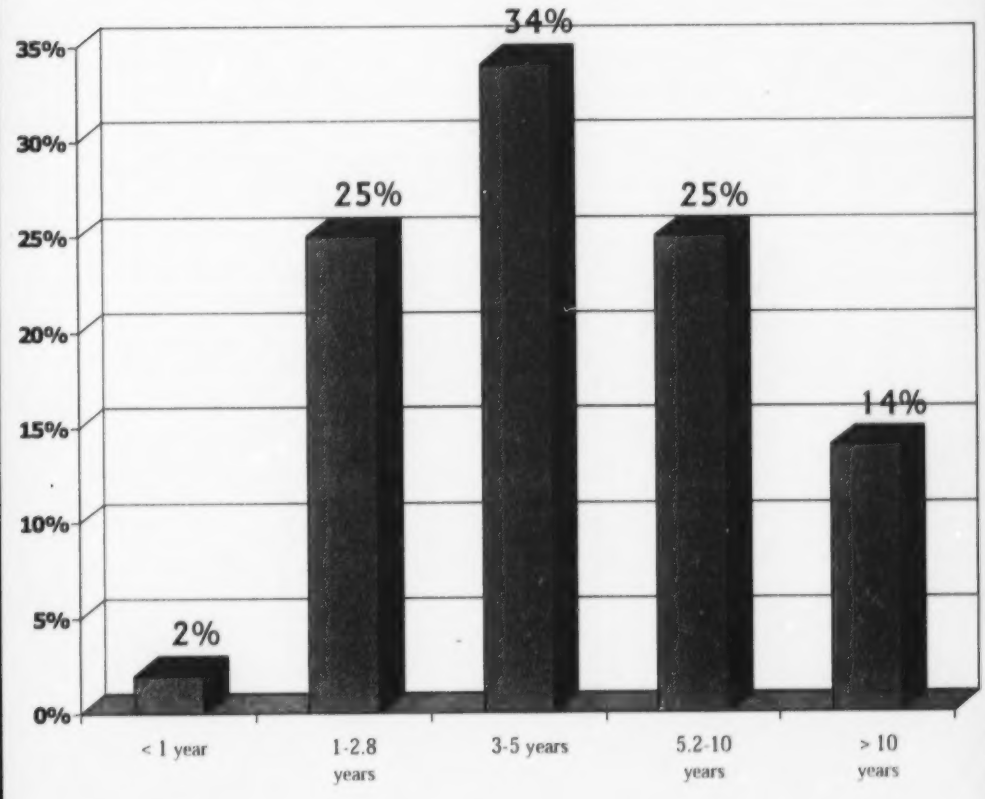
Once-Removed Superintendents Years of Service



Some districts had more turnover than others. Ten districts had more than 5 superintendents during the approximate 15-year period identified in the survey.

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CUBE Member Districts

CUBE Districts	State	Enrollment	Years of Service: Immediate Past Sup't.	Years of Service: Next Previous Sup't.	Years of Service: Sup't. Since June 2000
New York City Board of Education	NY	1,071,853	4.3	2.2	Interim***
Los Angeles Unified School District	CA	680,430	2.6	4.8	Interim***
Chicago Public Schools	IL	477,610	2	3	5
Miami-Dade County Public Schools	FL	345,958	5.7	0.7	3.6
Broward County School District	FL	224,799	5	5.5	0.8
Philadelphia School District	PA	212,865	10.9		5.9
Houston Independent School District	TX	210,988	2.5	4.7	6.3
Clark County School District	NV	190,822	4.3		11
Detroit City School District	MI	174,730	1.1	4	1
Dallas Independent School District	TX	157,622	1.6	1.1	1.2
Hillsborough County School District	FL	152,781	7	22	4
San Diego Unified School District	CA	136,283	5.2	10.6	2
Duval County School District	FL	126,979	7.8	13.2	1.8
Memphis City School District	TN	111,227	8	12.5	Interim***
Baltimore City Public School System	MD	107,416	6	3	2
Baltimore County Public Schools	MD	104,708	3	16	4.8
Jefferson County Public Schools	KY	104,338	12		6.7
Milwaukee School District	WI	101,253	1.7	2	1
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	NC	95,795	4.5	3	3.9
Wake County Public Schools	NC	89,772	5.4	4.9	5
Albuquerque Public Schools	NM	87,274	4	6	2
Orleans Parish School District	LA	83,175	5	6.9	1
Virginia Beach City Public Schools	VA	77,521	4	1.3	4.3
District of Columbia Public Schools	DC	77,111	1.5	5.4	2.2
Fort Worth Independent School District	TX	76,901	7.3	5.8	6
Cleveland Municipal School District	OH	76,504	0.7	2.8	1.7
Metro Nashville Public Schools	TN	67,558	4.7	12	3.4
Columbus Public Schools	OH	64,872	4.8	1.9	2.8
Boston Public Schools	MA	63,762	4	4.6	4.8
Tucson Unified School District	AZ	62,480	5	5.6	9
San Antonio Independent School District	TX	61,112	4.6	13	0.4
San Francisco Unified School District	CA	61,007	6.8	6	Interim***
Atlanta City School District	GA	60,024	4	4	1
Guilford County Schools	NC	59,903	7.3	*	0.1
East Baton Rouge Parish	LA	58,238	7.8	7	5
Portland School District	OR	55,321	6.5	10	1.9
Oakland Unified School District	CA	53,564	1.9	3.2	0.4
Cumberland County Schools	NC	51,014	4.5	3.5	3
Anchorage School District	AK	48,888	1.9	3	7.8

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Seattle School District	WA	47,883	3	9	2.2
Buffalo Public Schools	NY	47,010	3.6	6.8	0.5
Wichita Public Schools	KS	46,859	5.2	5.2	1.9
St. Louis City Public Schools	MO	46,235	5	7	4
St. Paul Public Schools	MN	45,142	7	6.8	1.2
Omaha Public Schools	NE	45,046	13.4		3.2
Newark Public Schools	NJ	44,160	4	10.6	0.8
Indianapolis Public Schools	IN	42,100	2.6	3.3	2.5
Tulsa Public Schools	OK	42,000	6.3	3.4	Interim***
Oklahoma City Public Schools	OK	40,500	4.8	2.7	Interim***
Pittsburgh School District	PA	40,181	1.8	5	1
Riverside Unified School District	CA	39,000	4	2.8	2
Toledo City School District	OH	38,846	5.8	5.3	3.8
Birmingham City Schools	AL	38,094	1.8	7.5	2.4
Norfolk Public Schools	VA	37,500	3.5	9	3
Salem-Keizer Public Schools	OR	35,245	13	14	Interim***
West Contra Costa Unified School District	CA	34,765	6.8	3.6	1.3
Montgomery Public Schools	AL	33,500	5.3	7	1
Rochester City School District	NY	32,257	2.8	6.3	5
Fort Wayne Community Schools	IN	31,931	3.7	10	5.3
Akron Public Schools	OH	30,899	3	24.3	5.2
Richmond Public Schools	VA	30,781	2	4	2.8
Durham Public Schools	NC	29,242	3.2	**	3.2
Rockford School District	IL	27,763	1.3	3.3	5.8
Aurora Public Schools	CO	27,500	6.3	12.8	7.6
Little Rock School District	AR	25,793	2.8	1	2.7
Yonkers Public Schools	NY	25,298	4.7	7.2	1.9
Madison Metropolitan School District	WI	25,087	6	6	2
Springfield School District	MA	24,878	7.2		10.6
Chula Vista Elementary School District	CA	23,425	3.8	1	7
Dayton Board of Education	OH	22,479	8	6	Interim***
Phoenix Union High School District	AZ	22,419	3.9	5.8	6
South Bend Community School Corp.	IN	21,195	5	2.2	7
New Haven Public Schools	CT	20,958	8.3		8
Sunnyside Unified School District	AZ	14,414	1.9		4
Roosevelt School District #66	AZ	12,329	7	5.5	Interim***
Kalamazoo School District	MI	11,000	14		4
Springfield City School District	OH	10,389	5	7	0.2
Average Years of Service					
Mean			**5.0**	**6.4**	**3.6**
Median			**4.7**	**5.5**	**3.0**

Enrollment - Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey and Public Elementary/Secondary Education Agency Universe Survey, 1997-98.

* Guilford - Merged Districts **Durham - Merged Systems

***Interim superintendents as of June 2000 were not calculated in the mean or median

Largest U.S. Cities

District	State	Enrollment	City Ranking	Years of Service: Immediate Past Sup't.	Years of Service: Next Previous Sup't.	Years of Service: Sup't. Since June 2000
New York City Board of Education	NY	1,071,853	1	4.3	2.2	Interim*
Los Angeles Unified School District	CA	680,430	2	2.6	4.8	Interim*
Chicago Public Schools	IL	477,610	3	2	3	5
Houston Independent School District	TX	210,988	4	2.5	4.7	6.3
Philadelphia School District	PA	212,865	5	10.9		5.9
San Diego Unified School District	CA	136,283	6	5.2	10.6	2
San Antonio Independent School District	TX	61,112	8	4.6	13	0.4
Dallas Independent School District	TX	157,622	9	1.6	1.1	1.2
Detroit City School District	MI	174,730	10	1.1	4	1
San Jose Unified School District	CA	32,993	11	3	2.3	7.1
San Francisco Unified School District	CA	61,007	12	6.8	6	Interim*
Indianapolis Public Schools	IN	42,100	13	2.6	3.3	2.5
Duval County School District	FL	126,979	14	7.8	13.2	1.8
Columbus Public Schools	OH	64,872	15	4.8	1.9	2.8
Baltimore City Public School System	MD	107,416	16	6	3	2
El Paso Independent School District	TX	63,909	17	7.5	11	1
Memphis City School District	TN	111,227	18	8	12.5	Interim*
Milwaukee School District	WI	101,253	19	1.7	2	1
Boston Public Schools	MA	63,762	20	4	4.6	4.8
Austin Independent School District	TX	76,606	21	2.7	2.3	0.8
Seattle School District	WA	47,883	22	3	9	2.2
District of Columbia Public Schools	DC	77,111	23	1.5	5.4	2.2
Metro Nashville Public Schools	TN	67,558	24	4.7	12	3.4
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	NC	95,795	25	4.5	3	3.9
Portland School District	OR	55,321	26	6.5	10	1.9
Denver Public Schools	CO	67,858	27	0.8	4.8	Interim*
Cleveland Municipal School District	OH	76,504	28	0.7	2.8	1.7
Fort Worth Independent School District	TX	76,901	29	7.3	5.8	6
Oklahoma City Public Schools	OK	40,500	30	4.8	2.7	Interim*
Orleans Parish	LA	83,175	31	5	6.9	1
Tucson Unified School District	AZ	62,480	32	5	5.6	9
Kansas City 33	MO	38,711	33	2.3	3.9	0.9
Virginia Beach City Public Schools	VA	77,521	34	4	1.3	4.3
Long Beach Unified School District	CA	85,908	35	6.8		7.6
Albuquerque Public Schools	NM	87,274	36	4	6	2
Clark County School District	NV	190,822	37	4.3		11
Sacramento City Unified School District	CA	51,042	38	1.1	1.5	3.4
Atlanta City School District	GA	60,024	39	4	4	1
Fresno Unified School District	CA	78,166	40	5	2.3	3
Tulsa Public Schools	OK	42,000	42	6.3	3.4	Interim*
Omaha Public Schools	NE	45,046	43	13.4		3.2
Miami-Dade County Public Schools	FL	345,958	44	5.7	0.7	3.6
Oakland Unified School District	CA	53,564	45	1.9	3.2	0.4
Mesa Unified School District	AZ	69,764	46	14.8		1
Minneapolis Public Schools	MN	49,157	47	3.8	4.6	2.8
Colorado Springs School District 11	CO	32,815	48	2		13
Pittsburgh School District	PA	40,181	49	1.8	5	1
St. Louis City Public Schools	MO	46,235	50	5	7	4
Wichita Public Schools	KS	46,859	52	5.2	5.2	1.9
Toledo City School District	OH	38,846	53	5.8	5.3	3.8
Average Years of Service						
Mean				**4.6**	**5.2**	**3.4**
Median				**4.4**	**4.6**	**2.5**

City Ranking Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990

Enrollment Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey and Public Elementary/Secondary Education Agency Universe Survey, 1997-98.

* Interim superintendents as of June 2000 were not calculated in the mean or the median.

Methodology

In order to better understand the issue of superintendent service, the Council of Urban Boards of Education surveyed its member districts and the nation's 50 largest cities. The survey objectives were to capture not only the length of service of current superintendents, but also to examine the tenure of their predecessors between 1985 and June 2000. This approach was used to gather information about trends in service.

Careful thought was given to the definition of "superintendent" and "length of service." If an individual served as interim superintendent immediately before becoming superintendent, that interim period was counted in his/her total years of service. The terms of interim-only superintendents (those who did not become superintendent or had not yet been named superintendent) were not included.

Questionnaires were faxed to the superintendents in all 102 CUBE districts and superintendents in 50 of the nation's largest cities. Since many of the CUBE districts serve the country's largest cities, a total of 113 questionnaires were faxed. Four follow-up calls were made, and 78 percent responded.

CUBE Members

Anchorage School District, Anchorage, AK
Birmingham Public School System, Birmingham, AL
Mobile County Public Schools, Mobile, AL
Montgomery Public Schools, Montgomery, AL
Little Rock School District, Little Rock, AR
Cartwright School District #83, Phoenix, AZ
Phoenix Elementary Schools, Phoenix, AZ
Phoenix Union High School District, Phoenix, AZ
Roosevelt School District #66, Phoenix, AZ
Sunnyside Unified School District, Tucson, AZ
Tucson Unified School District, Tucson, AZ
Chula Vista Elementary School District, Chula Vista, CA
Fullerton Joint UHSD, Fullerton, CA
Hayward Unified School District, Hayward, CA
Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles, CA
Oakland Unified School District, Oakland, CA
West Contra Costa Unified School District, Richmond, CA
Riverside Unified School District, Riverside, CA
San Diego Unified School District, San Diego, CA
San Francisco Unified School District, San Francisco, CA
Aurora Public Schools, Aurora, CO
New Haven Public School District, New Haven, CT
District of Columbia Board of Education, Washington, DC
Broward County School District, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Duval County School Board, Jacksonville, FL
Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, FL
Hillsborough County School District, Tampa, FL
Atlanta Public Schools, Atlanta, GA
Hawaii State Board of Education, Honolulu, HI
Chicago School Reform Board of Ed., Chicago, IL
Rockford School District, Rockford, IL
Fort Wayne Community Schools, Fort Wayne, IN
Gary Community Schools, Gary, IN
Indianapolis Public Schools, Indianapolis, IN
South Bend Community School Corp., South Bend, IN
Wichita Public Schools #259, Wichita, KS
Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY
E. Baton Rouge Parish, E. Baton Rouge, LA
Orleans Parish Public Schools, New Orleans, LA
Baltimore City Public Schools, Baltimore, MD
Baltimore County Public Schools, Towson, MD
Boston Public Schools, Boston, MA
Worcester Public Schools, Worcester, MA
Detroit Public School System, Detroit, MI
Grand Rapids Public Schools, Grand Rapids, MI
Lansing School District, Lansing, MI
St. Paul Independent School District #625, St. Paul, MN
Jackson Public Schools, Jackson, MS
Kansas City School District, Kansas City, MO
St. Louis Public Schools, St. Louis, MO

CUBE Members

(continued)

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Charlotte, NC
Durham Public Schools, Durham, NC
Cumberland County School District, Fayetteville, NC
Guilford County Public Schools, Greensboro, NC
Wake County Public Schools, Raleigh, NC
Lincoln Public Schools, Lincoln, NE
Omaha School District, Omaha, NE
Camden Public Schools, Camden, NJ
Jersey City School District, Jersey City, NJ
Newark Board of Education, Newark, NJ
Paterson Public Schools, Paterson, NJ
Trenton Public Schools, Trenton, NJ
Albuquerque Public Schools, Albuquerque, NM
Clark County School District, Las Vegas, NV
New York City Board of Education, Brooklyn, NY
Buffalo Public Schools, Buffalo, NY
Rochester City School District, Rochester, NY
Syracuse City School District, Syracuse, NY
Yonkers Public Schools, Yonkers, NY
Akron Public Schools, Akron, OH
Cleveland City School District, Cleveland, OH
Columbus City School District, Columbus, OH
Dayton Board of Education, Dayton, OH
Springfield City School District, Springfield, OH
Toledo Public Schools, Toledo, OH
Youngstown City School District, Youngstown, OH
Oklahoma City Public Schools #89, Oklahoma City, OK
Tulsa Public Schools, Tulsa, OK
Portland School District, Portland, OR
Salem-Keizer Public Schools, Salem, OR
Philadelphia School District, Philadelphia, PA
Pittsburgh Public Schools, Pittsburgh, PA
Beaufort County School District, Beaufort, SC
Knox County Schools, Knoxville, TN
Memphis City Schools, Memphis, TN
Metro Nashville Public Schools, Nashville, TN
Amarillo Independent School District, Amarillo, TX
Dallas Independent School District, Dallas, TX
Ysleta Independent School District, El Paso, TX
Ft. Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, TX
Houston Independent School District, Houston, TX
Spring Branch Independent School District, Houston, TX
San Antonio Ind. School District, San Antonio, TX
Hampton City Schools, Hampton, VA
Norfolk Public Schools, Norfolk, VA
Portsmouth Public Schools, Portsmouth, VA
Richmond City Schools, Richmond, VA
Seattle School District, Seattle, WA
Madison Metropolitan School District, Madison, WI
Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee, WI